

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 HONG K 09982 181144Z
ACTION SS-25

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R 180930Z AUG 77
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6363
INFO USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

S E C R E T HONG KONG 9982

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP PROP CH TW US (VANCE, CYRUS R.)
SUBJECT: PRC SPOKESMAN IN HONG KONG COMMENT ON SECRETARY'S
VISIT

REF: A) PEKING 1729 EXDIS B) HONG KONG 8472 C) HONG KONG 9170
D) HONG KONG 9608 E) PEKING 1750

1. AS USLO OBSERVES REFTEL A, THE CHINESE ARE SENDING MIXED SIGNALS ON THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT. THIS IS VERY MUCH THE CASE IN HONG KONG WHERE LOCAL PRC-CONTROLLED PAPERS HAVE SOUNDING VARIOUSLY UPBEAT OR SKEPTICAL ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR MOVEMENT IN US-PRC RELATIONS. SUCH VARIETY COULD BE DUE IN SOME MEASURE TO IMPRECISE INTERNAL GUIDANCE, BUT HERE AT LEAST THERE CLEARLY IS ALSO TAILORING FOR DIFFERENT READERSHIPS (PRO-PRC, PRO-KMT, THE USG, ETC.). ALONG WITH TAILORING, WE SUSPECT A DESIRE TO COVER ALL BETS AS TO THE ACTUAL TONE AND OUTCOME OF THE VANCE VISIT, AND A WILLINGNESS IF NOT DESIRE TO KEEP US AND OTHERS GUESSING AS TO PEKING'S REAL EXPECTATIONS.

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2. AT ANY RATE, NONE OF THESE ARTICLES MODIFY PEKING'S STANCE ON TAIWAN; SOME OF THE UPBEAT ONES MERELY EMBELLISH POSITIONS OF US SUPPORTERS OF NORMALIZATION (FAIRBANK, BARNETT, ETC.) TO SHOW THAT THERE IS A HOPE OF PROGRESS IF THE USG ACCEPTS THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT IN HONG KONG THE MORE UPBEAT KIND OF COMMENTARY ON THE OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF THE TALKS STILL

PREDOMINATES. REFTEL C REPORTED THIS TENDENCY, A MORE RECENT EXAMPLE -- AND ONE THAT WE THINK CLEARLY SHOWED PARTY GUIDANCE -- IS A CONVERSATION THAT LI CHU-SHENG, THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF NCNA AND DE FACTO HEAD OF PRC ESTABLISHMENT HERE, INITIATED WITH ME AT A RECEPTION RECENTLY.

3. LI STARTED BY SAYING THAT THE CHINESE WELCOMED THE VANCE VISIT NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT INDICATED THE INTENTION OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO "PUSH FORWARD" SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PRC VIEWS ON THE SOVIET MENACE TO BE CONVEYED "DIRECTLY" BY THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP. EXPANDING ON THIS, HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON WORLD ISSUES (EXCLUSIVELY DEFINED IN TERMS OF AGGRESSIVE SOVIET DESIGNS EVERYWHERE) WOULD BE EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT AS DISCUSSION OF SINO-AMERICAN PROBLEMS, THE CHIEF BEING, OF COURSE, TAIWAN. ON THAT HE COMMENTED MILDLY THAT SINCE US LEADERS HAD "GREAT POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING" IT WOULD NOT TAKE LONG FOR THEM TO REALIZE THAT IT WAS MORE VALUABLE TO HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH A GOVERNMENT CONTROLLING 900 MILLION PEOPLE THAN ONE OF 16 MILLION.

4. LI REMARKED THAT SECRETARY VANCE MIGHT BE TOO TIRED FROM HIS RECENT MID-EASTERN TRIP TO UNDERTAKE INTENSIVE
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DISCUSSIONS IN PEKING. THIS SURPRISING OBSERVATION ENABLED ME TO STRESS HOW SERIOUSLY THE US TOOK OUR ENTIRE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRC. ASIDE FROM SAYING THAT I WAS SURE THE SECRETARY WOULD BE IN EXCELLENT SHAPE FOR THE TALKS, I DESCRIBED THE INTENSIVE REVIEW THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE OF OUR CHINA POLICY BEGINNING FROM ITS VERY EARLIEST DAYS AND EXTENDING TO THE WIDELY PUBLICIZED CONFERENCES THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD HAD WITH SECRETARY VANCE AND OTHER FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPERTS IN RECENT DAYS.

5. COMMENT: SINCE LI SOUGHT ME OUT AND LED THE CONVERSATION IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE CHINESE HOPE THAT THE VANCE TALKS WILL APPEAR TO HAVE GONE WELL EVEN THOUGH THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY SPECTACULAR BREAK-THROUGHS IN NORMALIZATION OF OUR RELATIONS. THUS, THE APPEARANCE OF GREAT US INTEREST IN THE VISIT ITSELF AND EVIDENCE OF SERIOUS INTENT ARE ENCOURAGING TO THE CHINESE.
CROSS

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